

NEWS

FROM YOUR MUSEUM

THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

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CANADA WAS INVADED

Among the great geological events in Canada's history were the Pleistocene glacial invasions. These occurred within comparatively recent times and the effects are still evident in the existence throughout the Dominion of countless lakes, rapids and water-falls. The rich soils of our agricultural regions in southern Ontario and the prairie provinces are also the direct result of glacial action.

The cause of this great ice invasion is still controversial but the fact is indisputable. The glaciers spread and retreated at least four times during the Pleistocene period of the last million years. There were mild spells between some of these invasions, when the climate was warmer than at the present time. Warm water shells and fragments of mild climate trees found as fossils testify to these moderate interglacial climates. Such mementos may be found in the Royal Ontario Museum.

Glaciers form in high land, and around the poles. It is believed that before the great ice invasion Canada stood much higher above set level than now, perhaps 2,000 feet. The ice weighed down the earth's crust and then melted away. The sea came up into the Lake Ontario basin and extended far into the Ottawa river depression. Later when the land gradually rose the sea retreated to its present position.

OPALS FOR OCTOBER

Opal is the gem for October. It is a great pity that for some years undeserved prejudices lessened the popularity of opal, one of the most beautiful gems. Perhaps its fragile structure has contributed to its reputation as an omen of ill luck. Sudden changes of temperature sometimes cause it to fracture.

Opal forms from a gelatinous silica mass in rock crevices. A multitude of cracks which develop in the jelly stage are filled with different opal. The variation of materials forming its structure causes the beautiful play of colour characteristic of the gem.

Precious opal is found in Hungary and Mexico, but Australia is its real home. It is considered the national gem of that country.

TRILOBITES ONCE DICTATORS OF THE DEEP

There was a day when Trilobites were marauders of the oceans. This curious tribe of extinct crustaceans, forbears of the lobster and crab, was the dominant life 500 million years ago. Trilobites held this ruling position in the animal world for at least 100 million years.

The Royal Ontario Museum's varied collection of these familiar and interesting fossils recalls the days in prehistory when all life seems to have been aquatic—the time of vast desolate seascapes and barren landscapes. Submarine competition and conflict were the order of the day. Trilobites vied with Brachiopods for supremacy while, as time marched on, Cephalopods and Placoderms helped to exterminate the Trilobites. Thus were overthrown the dictators of the deep.

PLACE NAMES in NEWS Recall ANCIENT HISTORY

Our armies are now striking at a very important part of the ancient world. Some of the towns of southern Italy and Sicily were once inhabited by Greeks. Place names now in the news reflect this fact of history. For example, Palermo was once Panormus; Siracusa was Syracusé; Messina was Messana; Reggio was Rhegium; Naples was Neapolis; and Taranto (the great naval base) was Tarentum.

Coins of these ancient towns exhibited in the Royal Ontario Museum illustrate the history and taste of the ancient Greeks who lived there. One of the most beautiful coins ever made is from Syracuse. It shows the head of the patron nymph, exquisitely curly-haired and jewelled—the ideal Greek beauty. Four dolphins swim around her, representing the sea.

Most of the coins are of silver, a few of gold and bronze. The silver is very pure and coins recently polished show to advantage the delicate art of the ancient coin-engraver.

FOOD—A TIMELY TOPIC

Exhibits in the Royal Ontario Museum throw light on Egyptian food of 1500 B.C. Then, as now, agricultural products played an important part in international affairs. Agricultural wealth was the underlying source of Egypt's power, the basis of her international trade, and the coveted goal of her enemies.

In the Museum's Egyptian collection there are agricultural implements, including hoes, rakes and winnowing fans; a 4000 year old model ploughman with plough hitched to a team of oxen; a similar model showing the birth of a calf; and finally, some actual wheat, bread, nuts and fruit. Further information on the Egyptian diet is gleaned from an ancient wall picture in the collection which records a great trade expedition to the south end of the Red sea in 1500 B.C. The Egyptian ambassador is seen welcoming the native king to a banquet. A decorative inscription in hieroglyphs describes the fare as "bread, beer, wine, meat, fruit and all the good things of Egypt."

"JACK RABBIT" FROM GERMANY

The so-called Jack Rabbit of southern Ontario is really a German hare. It was brought here from Germany in 1912, by a German, and released near Brantford. There is no evidence that he gave it the name Jack Rabbit to conceal its identity, but that name has prevented most people from recognizing it as a German hare. However, the same hare occurs in England and throughout central Europe; its real name is European hare.

The Royal Ontario Museum has kept a record of its spread. It reached Sarnia in 1920, Toronto in 1925, and Georgian Bay in 1927.

Like many other animals (and humans too) the hare is partly good and partly bad. Before the war when sportsmen could get ammunition the European hare was a favourite game animal in a part of Ontario not well provided with game. But hares have to eat and they find the farmer's crops to their liking, and in winter sometimes girdle orchard trees.

